

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Ms. ERNST pertaining to the introduction of S. 3836 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Ms. ERNST. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, last week, the Senate passed a \$1.5 trillion funding bill that the Democratic majority insisted was full of must-pass, got-to-have-it, can't-live-without-it provisions that the American people were demanding. Unfortunately, the reality of what made it into that bill doesn't match the fantasy my Democratic colleagues conjured up for the cameras.

In reality, this \$1.5 trillion package was another spending spree. It was complete with 4,400 earmarks—4,400 earmarks. Now, these earmarks don't have any Federal nexus. They are not connected to your military post or your Federal highway. These are things for shopping centers and parks and city renovations and—you name it—pet projects. So that is not government funding; that is a Big Government windfall that the American people simply can't afford.

As we all know, an inability to pay for these programs has never stopped this Democratic majority from shoving through their radical and increasingly destructive agenda. By their own admission, the out-of-control spending habits have contributed to decades-high inflation. Imagine that.

What we know is that, in Tennessee, I am talking to people every day. They can't afford food and gas and to pay all of their monthly expenses, but for some reason, my Democratic colleagues think taxpayers will be happy to pay for their pet projects back home—all 4,400 of them. You just can't make this stuff up.

The American people are really confused by this. They are also completely appalled by Joe Biden's refusal to secure the border, his refusal to invest in American energy independence, and his willingness to keep our economy entangled with the Chinese Communist Party. Every one of these points worries them. Yet what really scares them is the President's refusal to discuss any of it: Just don't talk about it. It will go away. Inflation, that is transitory. If gas is too expensive, go buy yourself an electric vehicle. This is just so disrespectful of hard-working men and women.

Joe Biden has caused a lot more problems than he solved during the

first year of his Presidency, and his constant pivots away from life-or-death problems have destroyed what little trust the American people had left in his ability to get the job done.

They like to think that the President cares about what happens to them—the American people, the citizens—but they haven't seen any evidence to suggest that he is thinking about them.

Last week, I was up on the Plateau in Tennessee, talking to Tennesseans about what is going on here in the Senate. Most of what they tell me boils down to one simple truth: From where they are sitting and the news they are watching and the papers they are reading, it is clear that the Democrats have a very aggressive agenda, but they have no vision for the future of this country. They feel like what the Democrats want is control over their daily life, not a vision of a country filled with open doors and opportunity for all. They are not seeing that out of this agenda.

Why, they ask me, do their elected representatives take such drastic measures to do things that make their lives harder, that make their situations worse? They can't figure it out.

Since Joe Biden and the Democrats took control, inflation has skyrocketed. We have become energy dependent on Russia. We have abandoned not one, but two embassies. We high-tailed it out of there. Two embassies, cut and run. Our Border Patrol, they are apprehending known terrorists and MS-13 gang members who are coming into this country. If they are apprehending them, we are getting some but not all. And now we are hearing about Russia going out, going to Iran, saying: Let me have your soldiers for hire; let me have your proxies, the Wagner Group, which is closely aligned with Vladimir Putin.

And all the time, Tennesseans are saying: Well, what about these terrorists trying to come over the southern border? Are they mercenaries? Are they soldiers for hire?

People are raising these issues. And this is all part of what the Democrats have accomplished this year.

The American people tolerate quite a bit from their government, but one thing they won't accept is a President who shrugs his shoulders, runs from the podium, who claims to be a victim of circumstance, who is weak-kneed and refuses to lead.

Even former Obama White House officials have come forward begging the Biden administration to stop the spin, face reality, show some leadership, deal with the situation. This has to be getting embarrassing, even for them.

The American people have spent the past year watching Joe Biden abandon the policies that kept the country from collapsing under the weight of the pandemic. And what has he replaced those policies with? Mandates, lockdowns that have made the country poorer, increased regulation that has stopped oil and gas exploration, increased regula-

tion that is making it tougher on manufacturers, a push for higher taxes—that is what they are doing. And do you know what? It makes people less hopeful. It makes people less free. It gives people fewer options.

See, that is what they are seeing. The Democratic agenda is all about government control of your life. It is an agenda; it is not a vision for this country, for our children, for our grandchildren that is rooted in opportunity for all.

There is only one way to undo this damage and to stop this train that this administration is pushing as hard as they can toward socialism. The President needs to stop the spin. He needs to start listening to what people are saying, people across the country.

Here is the thing: They don't want this President to fail. They don't want him to fail. They don't want this country to fail, so it means that the President is going to have to stop bowing to all of this environmentalism as a religion and climate change as a god. They need to stop that.

They need to see, yes, we need to have an Operation Warp Speed, to be energy independent, pull everybody together—Federal Agencies, the private sector.

We are the United States of America, and if we had the desire, we could do this. We could be energy independent once again. We could stand strong. We could stand strong against Russia, against Iran, against China and the Chinese Communist Party.

What that is going to require is an administration and a Democratic Party that has a vision for the greatness and goodness of this country.

I think that what we have to do is we have to lead the way in saying it is time to show respect for the American people, to listen to what they are telling us, and to make certain that we stand for this country, standing strong for future generations.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BENNET). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be able to complete my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ENERGY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as all of America knows, prices at the gas pump are skyrocketing. Over the weekend, the average gas price in Texas exceeded \$4 a gallon, and we typically have some of the cheapest gasoline in the country. We didn't even cross that line during the great recession of 2008. But we know that gas prices are not the only